1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

are available, then try for the best explanation knowing that new facts will very probably force a change in the historical picture you have created to best explain the facts. The greater the number of facts, the fewer the possible number of different historical interpretations that can be applied to any particular case. With these rules in mind let us examine briefly what facts are at hand to help us with Kanuri origins.

First of all we have the Kanuri legends themselves which state that they came originally from Yemen—a legend they share with most of the Muslim people of the western Sudan. Let us call this the local theory and come back to it after considering other available facts. Subsistence farming and cattle keeping came into the area of the central and western Sahara about 5000 years ago, as evidenced by a number of archaeological sites in the area. At that time the Tibesti region north of Lake Chad was much wetter and the lake itself was enormous. It stretched well into the Sahara desert, especially into a region just south of the Tibesti known as the Bodele depression, which even today is well below the present level of Lake Chad itself. People settled in this region and utilized both domesticated plants and animals for their basic means of subsistence. Since that time, however, there has been a steady desiccation of the central Sahara which has dried up the Tibesti and the Bodele depression while the water has retreated in a southwesterly direction towards the present site of Lake Chad. As late as 500 B.C. merchants from Carthage were voyaging to the Tibesti to trade with people who lived in a wet climate among crocodiles, hippopotami, and giraffes.[1] Certainly what evidence we have suggests a very ancient trade between the people of the entire Sahara and those of North Africa. This was much expanded by the introduction of the camel sometime in the first or second century A.D. which facilitated trade across much drier portions of desert and over much longer distances. If we add to this evidence the fact that the Kanuri language is related to the central Saharan group of languages—and these are as a group only very distantly related to all other African language families—then a picture or at least a theory begins to emerge.

The Neolithic agriculturalists in the southern Sahara were drawn further south between 1000 B.C. and 1000 A.D. as the waters of the desert began to recede southward.[2] As they moved southward they pulled the Saharan trade with them, and competition among groups in the Chad basin produced some differences in power and recognized status among clans who lived in the area. Leading lineages within these clans began to unite to govern the activities of clan members until finally the various clans formed loose federations with a leading clan and its leading lineage as the royal or kingly one.[3]

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[1] See Rhys Carpenter, "A Trans-Saharan Caravan Route in Herodotus," *Journal of American Archaeology*, Vol. 60, 1956, pp. 231–42.

[2] This process was also occurring in another area of "desert capture," the upper Niger bend where desert wet regions north of the river receded towards the south. The Niger itself bends into the Sahara, because like the Chad basin there are lowlands to the north of the great bend. Thus it is no accident that the Chad basin and the upper Niger bend have witnessed some of the earliest developments of centralized states in the western Sudan—they were the two areas into which the people of the desert could most naturally and easily move as desiccation proceeded.

[3] In his book on Bunyoro, John Beattie very concisely defines a lineage as "all the descendants in one line (that is, either through males only or through females only) of a particular person through a specified number of generations. It differs from a *clan* in that while usually all the

173 Given the fact that very many of the Muslim peoples of West Africa have legends concerning their origins in the Near East and often more specifically in Yemen, we can, I believe, think of the local origin theory as a mythical genesis story that is part of a widespread cultural heritage of the Muslim people of West
• 174 Africa, likening it in this way to western stories about the Garden of Eden. On the other hand we do have "hard" linguistic evidence that the Kanuri people are related to peoples of the central Sahara northeast of Bornu. We also have very suggestive evidence from the geographic history that relates the people speaking these languages to one another and gives us grounds for positing immigration into the Chad basin and an increasing population density in the area. The exact details of this theory are matters for future research, but the major conclusion which places the origin of the Kanuri in the central Sahara seems to be a valid one.

At any rate, by the end of the first millennium A.D. the Muslim world outside the Sudan knew of the existence of Kanem, a sovereign state due south of Tripoli on the southern rim of the Sahara. Local traditions associated with the king lists (these have been collected periodically since 1850) assert that Islam came at least to the rulers of Kanem in the eleventh century. According to the traditions an eleventh-century Mai or king is supposed to have died in Egypt on his
175 way to Mecca. Certainly by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Kanem became a well-known state in the Islamic world. Trans-Saharan commerce was completely controlled, garrisons were built to protect the trade routes, and treaty relations were established with the Hafsid rulers of Tunis. In the mid-thirteenth century a travelers' house for Kanem pilgrims was constructed in Cairo so that they might have proper accommodation while on the long journey to Mecca via Egypt. At the other extreme of the Islamic world, in Spain, a poet from Kanem was renowned in the court of El Mansur (1190–1214 A.D.) in Seville for his praise songs of the Sultan. This was a great period of Islamic civilization and Kanem played its part in that florescence.

175 From the mid-thirteenth to the end of the fourteenth century a period of
648 dark ages befell the kingdom. This is sometimes referred to as "the time of troubles." The dynastic chronicles indicate this period by including a great many rulers all holding sway for very short periods. The kingdom seems to have become a tempestuous stage for civil wars within and continuous attack from without. A letter to Cairo from this period has turned up, sent by a Kanem ruler, asking that the Caliph of Egypt send word to Sudanese Arabs who were helping Wadai to the east of Kanem raid amongst the people of Kanem for slaves even though such actions are considered to be against the precepts of Islam, since one must not raid for slaves amongst other Muslim peoples.[4] The main source of trouble is supposed to have come from one particular group—the Bulala. These people were either an allied subordinate tribe or a clan whose leading lineage had split off from the Kanem royal line and had then grown in its independence and power until its leaders challenged the Kanem control of the kingdom.

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members of a lineage know exactly how they are related to all the other members of it, and together, they often form a corporate group, clan members may not be able to trace genealogical
[113] links with other clan members, and often clansfolk are widely dispersed." See John Beattie, *Bunyoro: An African Kingdom*, Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 3.

[4] See R. H. Palmer, *Bornu, Sahara, and Sudan*, (London: John Murray, 1936), p. 195.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Finally in the late fourteenth century, a rebellious Bulala group east of Lake Chad upset the Magumi Sefuwa rulers of Kanem, who ultimately came to the southwest portion of the Chad basin to establish what later became the empire of Bornu.

The collapse of the great Kanem empire in the fourteenth century is attributed by tradition to internal civil wars resulting from the Bulala revolt against the Sefuwa dynasty. The ultimate cause is rationalized in legend by an alleged irreligious act of the seventeenth king or Mai of Kanem, one Dunama, (*ca.* 1220–1260 A.D.) who is supposed to have "laid the foundations for the ensuing disaster of the empire by opening the sacred talisman of Bornu" which subsequently provoked men of ambition to entreat against the state.[5] It may or may not be true, but it is very likely not the entire explanation even if we were to know what the "sacred talisman" was—which we do not; knowledge of its meaning and content have long since disappeared. Other reasons for the collapse of the kingdom besides that of a civil war against the Bulala can be suggested. The kingdom was in all likelihood not highly centralized and the nobles could quite easily unite, obtain outside help, and try to gain control. Indeed all of the traditions of the Bulala tell of them obtaining help from the Tubu of the central Sahara (a rebellious group who were tributary to Kanem) against the ruling Kanem dynasty.

Another factor is the nature of succession to the throne. Throughout the Sudan, and for as long as any traditions go back in Bornu, succession to the throne has always been open to those whose fathers have been monarchs. However, given many short reigns, this custom increases the number of contenders enormously and therefore exacerbates competition for royal office in the state so that the danger of civil wars and lack of unity is accelerated; the state is then much weakened as an effective political force. In other words, given a few short reigns, the possibility that more will follow becomes even greater unless a strong man with very strong backing emerges to quell the factions supporting various royal contenders. Finally it should be realized that Bornu was a much greener land than Kanem and it might have actually attracted the Kanem ruling group and their followers away from the drier, more inhospitable northern shores of Lake Chad. Certainly the kingdom of Kanem was not of such a nature that it suddenly collapsed when people (later to be called Kanuri) left. The Bulala clan assumed the leadership and Kanem continued as a sovereign state while the Kanuri tried, unsuccessfully at first, to reconquer their lost empire.

By the end of the fifteenth century the Sefuwa and their clan, the Magumi, had obtained sovereignty to the southwest of Lake Chad, and under a series of able monarchs they established their new kingdom of Bornu as a great power in the Sudan. The first of these rulers to organize and establish a really powerful state was a man named Ali Ghajedeni (*ca.* 1470–1500 A.D.), the forty-eighth monarch on the Sefuwa dynastic list. He built a new capital called Birni Ngazargamo, "the walled fortress," at the north end of Bornu and united this new kingdom under his control. Ali is supposed to have reconquered Kanem and re-established control over the Saharan trade while making war continually against Songhai to the west over the subjugation of the Hausa states and the east-west trade routes across the Sudan. His reign was followed by a series of others no less nota-

[5] H. Barth, *Travels and Discoveries in North and Central Africa*, Vol. II, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1857), p. 637.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

mans and ruled it after World War I as a League of Nations Trust Territory, (later a U.N. Trust Territory) which meant in practice that it was part of the administrative responsibility of the colonial officials in Northern Nigeria. To appreciate more clearly what changes were brought about by colonialism, however, it is necessary to understand something of the social, economic, and in particular the political structure of Bornu, as it developed during pre-colonial times, and it is to this task that the remainder of the chapter is devoted.

Kanem-Bornu: The Social and Political Background

Only the sketchiest oddments of information are available about the nature of Kanem society. One Arabic record speaks of its capital as a city of tents, and traditions tell of a "Council of Nobles" that had a great deal of power over decision-making by the king, or Mai as he was called. From this and a few other data, such as the emphasis placed on the clan membership of persons mentioned in the early periods of the dynastic lists, we can attempt a reconstruction that fits the facts. The early kingdom seems to have been made up of patrilineal, named clans under senior or noble lineages (also named) whose heads formed the so-called "Council of Nobles" under the king or Mai. The Mai himself was head of the senior lineage of a senior clan considered to be the most important or powerful in the region. In all probability the term "Mai" or "king" was used for all leaders of clans just as it is today among some of the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the Sahara to the north of Lake Chad who are closely related to the Kanuri. It also appears that the great Kanuri king lists are just what local people say they are—lists of the leaders of the Magumi Sefuwa or Sefuwa lineage heads of the Magumi clan. People in the clan considered themselves related by ties of descent to a common ancestor; but they could not describe the exact link with him, while they could describe the genealogical ties through men that made them all Sefuwa. Very probably these people utilized both cattle and domesticated plants although their early city of tents, referred to by Arabic historians, also suggests a greater emphasis on nomadism and the use of cattle. This is consistent with the clan organization described above; indeed this form of organization is widespread among nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples in the Sahara, North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Arabia. Later, as attested by the ruins at Garamoulé northwest of Lake Chad they probably built more permanent settlements and very likely used slaves from the south of Lake Chad as trade goods and as agricultural laborers.

How centralized and developed the early stages of the Kanem state really were is an intriguing and difficult question and one that can be solved only by extensive historical and archaeological research. Certainly concepts of statecraft from Islamic areas to the north of the desert and trips by Kanem monarchs to Mecca would have acquainted the rulers with the ideas of very highly centralized states. How much this actually affected Bornu is unknown, although it is possible that tensions over the power of the central monarch were another reason for the civil strife which led eventually to the migration of the Sefuwa from Kanem to Bornu.

After the Sefuwa set up their kingdom in Bornu the state became a much more highly organized and centrally controlled political system. The people who

175 The Shehu of Bornu,
648 however, remains as the religious and political head of the
643 Kanuri people.

C. The Ethnographic Distribution of Peoples in the Area.

197 1. Linguistic Classification.

The Kanuri language, according to Greenberg's classification, is part of the Central Saharan language family, one of the twelve genetically distinct language families which he has isolated in Africa. The Central Saharan language family includes Kanuri, Teda, Dazza, Zaghawa, Baele, Bideyat and Berti, all in contiguous distribution. The Kanuri are the southwesternmost extension of this language family. They are almost completely surrounded by people speaking languages of the Chad family. These include: Hausa, Buduma, Kotoko, Mandara, Marghi, and Bolewa. In this solid block of Chad-speaking peoples the Kanuri form a peninsula of Central Saharan speakers, related to [174] languages far to the northeast. This is in agreement with the historical sources which trace the movement of the Kanuri into Bornu from the area northeast of Lake Chad.

2. The Major Groups.

648 The historical factors which led to the development of the
177 empire of Bornu and determined its relations to neighboring peoples and states are reflected in the cultural distribution of
[171] peoples in the area today. The Kanuri are one of the many Mos-
[179] lem peoples stretching in a wide belt across the Western Sudan.

602 627 younger brother (kərami) of the child's father, a relative belonging to the child's dur bube, will avenge the child's death, and under those circumstances the law will not punish the avenger. The kərami of the child's mother will do nothing, for should he avenge the death of his sister's child the law states that he himself may be punished. This seems to be the only case for stating that the dur bube is stronger than the dur chambe.

• 174 611 It is extremely difficult to reconstruct earlier Kanuri social organization, and to indicate the changes which it has gone through. It is evident however, that patrilineal descent groups were present at the time of the accounts of Barth and Nachtigal, both of whom spent long periods of time with the Ka-

174 nuri in the nineteenth century. For earlier periods of the history of Bornu, names are given for tribes, and, in the history of federation, conquest and civil strife, these names sometimes have an ethnic or linguistic character; at other times they seem to designate political entities; and again they also resemble clans at times.

192 563 The Kanuri have a word, jili, which means "kind" or "sort", but can be used specifically for "nation," "people," or "kin

[101] group." A person's jili would first be given as Kanuri; he would then indicate sub-groups of Kanuri--Kanuri proper, Buduwai,

563 Kobber, Manga, Kwoyam etc. These sub-groups today speak dialects

184 174 of Kanuri which are all mutually intelligible, and no other in-

[197] digenous languages. They represent ethnic sub-groups who now share in the same larger culture, but who may have entered Bornu

174 184 563 at different times, or may have become assimilated to Kanuri culture. A shatter-belt of small tribes, part-pagan and part-Moslem, and strongly influenced by Kanuri culture, rings Bornu Emirate. (These have been described in Chapter I.) North of Bornu are the Kanembu, closely related culturally and linguistically to the Kanuri, and with an inter-twined history that goes back to the Empire of Kanem, which preceded the Empire of Bornu. [614] The Kanembu and the Kanuri share another set of jilis--which appear to be the remnants of patrilineal kin groups, or patri-sibs.

173 614 The word jili will here be used in a very restricted sense to refer to the sib. Informants with an interest in the history of Bornu and with a strong historic sense relate that the jilis were no longer functioning in the days when Shehu Laminu ruled at Kukawa. Kanuri, Kanembu and all the sub-groups of Kanuri (Kwoyam, Mobber, Manga etc.) were sub-divided into jilis with [304] the same names cross-cutting them. A child was of the same jili as his father, and each jili had its distinctive facial scars by which its members could immediately be identified. The jili was not endogamous. Each jili had its common ancestor, whose name is known for every jili; each jili had as its head [651] someone appointed by the Mai, or king. The primary function of the jili head was to collect taxes (haraji) from the people of [643] his jili. The Mais of old were of the jili Magumi, the royal [613] sib, and of the sub-jili Sef. All individuals of the sub-jili Sef are descended from Sef Isami who is reputed to have come

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177 been left out of the historical accounts of the area or have been played down so considerably that the reader finds it easy to forget that the Sudan is geographically adjacent to the Guinea coast. Lady Lugard[1] set the style for this kind of thinking when she described the Sudan as "facing north". Yet the gold, the slaves, and the lowly kola-nut, which became popular as an article of consumption from Kano to Tripoli, all required well established relationships and contacts between the peoples of the Sudan and those to the south of them from very early times.

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197 Evidence on the early beginning of the Kanuri people is scant. Linguistically they belong to the central Saharan group of languages which extends like a boot into modern northeastern Nigeria, but for the most part takes up the area of the central Sahara, reaching north to include a good portion of Fezzan, all of Tibesti, and stretching eastward in the desert until it meets the Afro-Asiatic group of languages, the so-called Hamito-Semitic group.[2] Greenberg comments on the distinctiveness of the central Saharan group of tongues, and we may safely attribute to them a
174 respectable time depth.[3] Gautier has shown that Lake Chad delivered water
133 into the Bodélé region in past times.[4] According to another writer the whole territory northeast of Lake Chad was a great swampy shallow area until the early centuries of the Christian era. This was maintained by the overflow through a river valley (the Bahr el Ghazal) which is now only a dry depression. The surplus Chad water still flows along this passage today beneath the soil.[5] Less than a century ago, Nachtigal saw the first

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(1) Shaw, F.L. (Lady Lugard), A Tropical Dependency (London), 1905, p.3.
(2) Greenberg, J.H., Studies in African Linguistic Classification: IV Hamito-Semetics, SWJ, 6, 1950.
(3) Gautier, E.F., Sahara the Great Desert, (London) 1935, pp.68-69.
(4) Tilho, J. in Geographic Journal LVI, 1920, quoted in Carpenter, Rhys, A Trans-Saharan Caravan route in Herodotus, Americal Journal of Archeology, Vol. 60, 1956, p. 240.
(5) Nachtigal, G., Sahara und Sudan, p. 77ff

174 133 80 miles of its bed in flood and boats being used in these seasonal swamps.(1) Carpenter feels that it was these wet lands south of the Fezzan rather than the Niger that Eratosthenes spoke of to Herodotus. It seems reasonable to suppose that as these enormous wet lands dried up central Saharan speaking peoples followed the course of this retreat and moved slowly over the centuries into the Chad basin, or at least concentrated more densely in this geographically favourable area.

175 Until more historical and archeological research has been carried out, it would be wise to neglect some of the later writers' fanciful reconstructions and to concur with the ever careful Barth, in speaking of the first centuries of the Kanuri kingdom as its "silent beginnings".(2)

175 797 Most scholars are agreed that the rulers of Bornu embraced Islam somewhere around the end of the 11th century. El Bekri writing circa 1067 A.D. speaks of the people of Kanem as idolators.(3) However it is most likely that besides consulting merchants and travellers, he was consulting older [173] texts on the subject. The king lists all agree on the fact that Mai (king) Hume (1085-1097 A.D.) died in Egypt on the way to Mecca, and it is upon this evidence that Islam is at present dated in Bornu.(4)

[177] Urvoy feels that this contact with Islam brought with it the knowledge of expansionism, powerful monarchy, and the idea of tributaries.(5) Whether this is true, or whether Islam only enhanced tendencies

175 642 already present is impossible to say at present. Whatever the answer, it is recorded that the son of the above mentioned Hume, Dunama I (1097-1150 A.D.) expanded the little state of Kanem, northeast of Lake Chad, into

(1) Carpenter, Rhys, op.cit. p. 239.
(2) Barth, H. Travels in North and Central Africa, Vol.II (London) 1857, p. 643.
(3) El Bekri, quoted in Barth, H. op. cit., p. 634.
(4) Urvoy, Y. Chronologie du Bornu, Journal de la Société des Africanistes, 12, 2, 1942, pp. 271-289.
(5) Urvoy, Y. Histoire de l'Empire du Bornu, Mem. IFAN, 7, 1949, p.36

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642 However, resuscitation was at hand. In the last part of the 15th century, the kingdom was reconsolidated by the 48th Mai, Ali Ghajidami (1472-1504 A.D.), who quelled the civil wars and restored some measure of peace between the high ranking officials, with himself firmly [103] in authority. He built a new capital, Birni Gazargamo on the river Ye [361] (Komadu'u Yobe), about half way between the present towns of Damasak and Geidam, on the border of Nigeria and French West Africa in Bornu Province. [648] His reign was marked by the re-conquest of the territory of Kanem, north- [721] east of Chad, the extension of Bornu hegemony into Boriku and Tibesti in the north, and continual but indecisive warfare against the powerful empire 175 of Songhai in the west. It is also about this time that Bornu is first mentioned in the early European maps of Africa put out by the Portugese cartographers of the late 15th century. Mai Ali's reign was followed by a series of others no less notable, including that of Mai Idris Alooma, for whom we have a contemporary record written by his court scribe sometime around the beginning of the 17th century.(1) It is Idris who is supposed to have introduced the technique of burnt brick into the area. However, there is some doubt on this point for it is known that the Songhai king Mansa Musa brought back from his great pilgrimage a Granada poet and architect, Es Saheli, who built a mosque at Gao (200 miles due east of Timbuctu on the Niger) of burnt brick at the beginning of the 14th century.(2)

[721] When the second empire was founded at Birni Gazargamo, fighting increased against the So, a people with whom the Kanuri seem to have 174 fought continually throughout their history. A small digression must be made here in order to assess these often mentioned So people of the ancient traditions. These people are said to have been native to the Bornu

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua: History of the First Twelve Years of the Mai Idris Alooma, 1571-1583, by his Imam; trans. by H.R. Palmer, 1926.
(2) Bovill, E.W., Caravans of the Old Sahara, London, 1933, p. 73

174 area before the arrival of the Kanuri. French workers claim that the Kotoko tribe who live today around the area of Fort Lamy are the contemporary descendants of the ancient So peoples, and French archeologists have been digging up "So" sites for some years.(1) Kanuri traditions speak of the So as "giants" whom they finally vanquished after suffering great tribulations. Many of the monarchs in the Bornu King lists are described as dying in battle against the So. The stories of these "giants" are not however confined to Kanuri traditions, but can be found all over the Chad area, and well up into the desert, especially around Bilma.(2) This last point suggests a hypothesis that the So were really not any one group of people but a linguistic category in the Central Sahara, referring to aboriginal inhabitants who opposed the incoming group, or, against whom "our" group had to fight in times gone by. To support this argument, there is the evidence that the word So is an Arab usage from the Maghreb, which refers generally to all dark skinned peoples of Tibesti and the Sudan.(3) When it is realized that the first writers of Kanuri history must have been able to speak Arabic, as well as having a knowledge of its script, it is not surprising that this North African word for the indigenous people of the Sudan should be carried down to the present day. This leads to the conclusion that any search for the So culture, using the traditions of the present day inhabitants, is doomed to disappointment, for it is most likely that there was not one, but many So cultures and peoples.

175 648 Soon after the founding of the city of Birni Gazargamo, Bornu achieved a florescence in its history. During this second zenith of the Kanuri empire, Bornu vied with Songhai as the most powerful of the great Sudanic states. Embassies were maintained at Tripoli and the Hausa states

(1) Seliquer Capitaine; Elements d'une Etude Archeologique du Pays du Tchad, Bull. IFAN, Vol. 7, 1945, pp.191-209.
(2) Buchanan, Angus; Sahara, quoted in Palmer, H. op. cit., p. 126.
(3) Bovill, E.E., op. cit. p.23.

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642 The political organization of the 19th century was almost completely overhauled by Rabeh. Fiefs were re-constructed with new boundaries and given to his own followers, while the old fief holders were often killed. But it should be stressed that complete chaos was not the rule of the day, as many writers have assumed. Rabeh was establishing a state under a new and alien leadership. It had been done by Laminu at the beginning of the 19th century, albeit with much less internal turbulence. It is most probable that had history given him the chance Rabeh would have founded the third dynasty of the Bornu empire and linked its relations much more closely to the east. It was European events that impaired the direction of this development. Rabeh's triumph and abortive attempt at empire building was cut short because in the European world the "scramble for Africa" had come to Nigeria and was rapidly closing in on the would-be king.

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127 The presence of a good sized literature on pre-British Bornu, including travellers's accounts, the extant collections of early Kanuri records, especially the historical writing of Ahmed ibn Fartua,(1) and the so-called "District Notebooks" of early 20th century British Colonial Officers who tried to reconstruct the pre-Rabeh political organization and tax structure of Bornu, enable us to say something about the life of the Emirate in its pre-European period. To this list of sources can be added the oral traditions of contemporary Kanuri, especially some of the older men in and around the Shehu's court.

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642 Very little remains at present (besides the archeological material) to record the life of Bornu in the early pre-Muslim days of the

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua; op. cit.

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642 kingdom. It is probable that the early state was organised as a group of clans, with one clan and a lineage within it as the ruling group. There is the possibility that this dominant group was an intrusive one, but this point has been so over-stressed with no substantiating data by other writers, that it would be wiser to leave it until sufficient archeological research has been done.

175
829 After the move to Bornu and the founding of the capital of Birni Gazargamo we have some contemporary data with which to assess the life of the times. Ibn Fartua expresses the feelings of a chief servant of the Mai concerning the ethical nature of the state in the 16th century. He says that " . . .every people relies on imitation of its leaders. The leader goes before and the people follow him. He leads them to the Garden as it were by a bridle, after giving the Book of Direction, glad tidings about the Faith, right direction, and sure guidance in the path of law. So every man knows his rights and his obligations to others. Most excellent is the fame of just deeds, and justice on the part of a Mai for one day is equal to service of God for sixty years . . . A place where there is an evil Mai is better than a place which has none." (1) Thus the structural position of the Mai is extolled as being even more important than its functions, for when a leader is present every man knows his relationship to other men, and the people are enjoined to feel blessed at the fact of political leadership per se.

175
631 The political organisation of Bornu during the second florescence of the kingdom was structured outwards from the capital at Birni Gazargamo with the cardinal directions of the State under the military protection of four titled noblemen. The south was under the Yuroma or chief eunuch; the north was held by the Mustrema (also a eunuch); the east by the Kaigama (a

(1) Ahmed ibn Fartua, op. cit. pp.10-11.

4: Cohen E-5 (1956-1957) 1961
MS14 Kanuri MS14

121 work. This means that minute details of innovation and social life in general can be recorded at the level of the "common man" as contrasted with the analysis of regional or national productivity figures, or of government policies, or United Nations statistics. What emerges is not, therefore, a total picture of the development process, but rather a grass roots view of the reaction to planned culture change by the people at whom the programme was aimed in the first place.

The purpose of this article is to document and analyse an innovation that succeeded technically, and yet failed because the human components of the innovation experience were not taken into account.

101 The place is Africa, the time is 1956-57. But it could very well be the Near East, Asia or South America, anytime between 1940 and 1960. The people are the Kanuri of Bornu Province, Northern Nigeria, but they could be peasants anywhere.

The Context

174 The Kanuri of Bornu province in northeastern Nigeria have
175 been organized as a Muslim emirate in the Chad basin for
[131] many centuries. Their language classification by Greenberg
[642] (1954), early Arabic sources, and the scattered work of a few interested scholars, supports the notion of their continuity in the region, with possible origins somewhere to the northeast of
[177] their present habitat. The pre-colonial emirate kept up continual trade and cultural contacts with the Maghreb during its long history as an organized state.

161 The Kanuri number about one and a half million. The
311 population density is approximately sixty per square mile and there is no pressure on farmland, which can be extended simply by clearing new bush areas further away from the population
433 settlements. The majority of the people are peasants who carry
241 on three analytically separable economic activities. These consist
44 of (1) farming, primarily millet and guinea corn, supplemented
[434] by maize, beans, squashes, cucumbers, and groundnuts, (2) cash cropping, mostly groundnuts, and (3) a dry season non-farming activity connected with the market. Market activities are in